

To the Members of the California State Senate:

I am returning Senate Bill 820 without my signature.

This bill is a very comprehensive measure that attempts to address a host of water rights issues, including surface and groundwater, in one bill. While the author should be recognized for the effort on urban water management plans, energy consumption associated with water use, and surface water diversion reports, the bill is flawed by only reviewing half the groundwater equation. By mandating extraction reports without analysis of recharge, groundwater quality, basin composition, and other issues essential to understanding the health of the groundwater basin, this bill creates a significant burden on property owners that will not provide the information necessary to lead to sustainable decision making.

The Department of Water Resources is already mandated to develop Bulletin 118, which is the statewide update on groundwater basins. The report includes a thorough analysis of groundwater including a review of boundaries and hydrographic features, yield data, water budgets, well production characteristics, water quality, and development of a water budget for each groundwater basin. A more effective approach than this bill would be for the State to work with local districts and landowners to compile the existing data on extraction, recharge, and basin composition to get a complete analysis of what we know and do not know, then develop a plan to acquire the information necessary to fill the data gaps to enhance the existing mandate for Bulletin 118 and make that document even more useful.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger